000 Food is not, as ascetics proclaim, just a means of prolonging a puritan existence. Far from it. Feeding—the exquisite pleasure of absorbing nourishment—is a very intimate part of the most important and the most pleasurable experiences of life. Manners and costumes associated with eating often give a faithful picture of a whole epoch, reflecting the various stages of its development whithout artificial gloss or sham. The standard of cooking and table manners reveals human—or all too human—characteristics, both of individuals and of races.

In Austria—as you will already have noticed—everything dates a long way back, the most modern things originating at the latest in the days of Maria Theresia. Very much dates back to Leopold, the saintly Babenberg, and even to the Romans. Gastronomy, the art of the epicure, goes back to prehistoric times, for in Vienna the fact has never been overlooked that taste is the first sense to awaken and the last to fade. Literature expresses its universal importance with the words: Eating is life intensified.

181 The words "Wiener Lebensart"—the Viennese manner of living—implies first of all a cultivated appreciation of all the pleasures of life—something which the non-Viennese may dismiss as self-gratification. The Viennese know how to interpret gratification, and find in it nothing derogatory. On the contrary, delight in pleasures of the senses, a desire to enjoy the good things of life contribute towards creative achievement. These things are the inexhaustible source of the Austrian people's artistic gifts, the primary urge to stretch out one's hand towards violin or palette and brush. From them arise the vagaries of fashion, the inspired variations of applied art and that style of living and being which the ancestors called "the life of the Phaeaces".

Would Odysseus ever have returned to his Penelope without the help of Nausikaa, the well-disposed daughter of the Phaeaces of the pleasure-loving island of Scheria? The reproach implied in the word "Phäakentum" only arouses a smile here. People are well contented that pleasure-loving Vienna should be an island in the wearisome and baffling journey of life.

But let us approach the important subject of gastronomy with a respectful obeisance to bygone days:

262 A HERITAGE FROM GODS AND ANCESTORS. One can hardly speak of a culinary art prior to the arrival of the Romans and the Germanic tribes in the country, for the Celts were very primitive eaters. Their food consisted of very little bread but plenty of meat, which was boiled in water or roasted on a spit.

●261 From the Teutons two principles have been handed down unaltered—that nothing 574 should be begun on an empty stomach, and that the famous Teutonic hospitality was a first duty. As Tacitus says in his "Germania": "No other race is so eager

261 to offer unlimited entertainment and hospitality. For these people it is wrong to close one's doors to anyone, no matter whom."
574 Early Austrian guide books praise Viennese hospitality in the same way. The Viennese, according to many later accounts, were always fond of eating and drinking, especially in public places such as the Prater, Schönbrunn or the Augarten, a fact which earned them among foreigners the reputation of being heavy eaters. It was also their custom always to cook something special for the guest and to feed him lavishly.

261 But to return to the ancients. The Roman way of life had a greater influence on the stomachs of the Viennese than did that of the Teutons. In ancient Rome eating was a science in which delicate tastes were combined with unlimited luxury. Over the city on the Tiber hovered the spirit of culinary art. According to Plutarch, Caesar understood how to plan banquets with as much care and forethought as battles. Horace and Ovid reveal to us great interest in food and drink, refined by poetry. Ovid describes how a young man dipped his fingers in red wine during a feast in order to write a declaration of love on a small table. The feasts of Lucullus are still proverbial today and the gluttonous orgies of the parvenue Trimalchion are known to us through the tales of Petronius. Many a Viennese may have felt a spiritual bond with Cato as he repeated with a sigh his complaint: "How hard a thing it is to try to talk to one's belly, which has no ears to hear."

262 Cabbage, which they like to serve in Vienna as a garniture to the traditional beef, was known to the gods of the Greeks. It originated from the tears which the Thracian Prince Lycurgus shed when Bacchus bound him to a vine-pole for frivolously destroying grapes. The ancient Egyptians could consume quantities of beer and wine without getting drunk because they ate cooked cabbage before beginning their drinking bouts. Cato recommended the same practice to Roman drinkers.

Lettuce was sacred to Aphrodite because she once hid the new-born Adonis among lettuces. To the Greek gods salads came third among their favourite foods, following nectar and ambrosia. Viennese cannot have forgotten this, for in the preparation of this olympic dish they employ qualities required by other favourites of the gods, the poets—imagination, perseverance, instinct and the gift of composition.

527 The egg, which is supposed to have given birth to many divine, heroic and unwordly beings, was associated by the Teutons with hares, brightly coloured
262 eggs being sacrificed at the feast of Ostara, the Goddess of Spring, whose favourite animal was the hare. Until the early Middle Ages it was the custom for godparents to bring painted eggs as present, to the christening. Searching for Easter eggs is still a pleasing custom in all parts of the Austrian provinces, and there is hardly a table at Easter which is not decorated with coloured eggs.